



THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, INC.

Appropriations Committee Hearing Testimony

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Co-Chairs Slap and Elliott and members of the Appropriation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide oral testimony in support of the continued biennium appropriations to the University of Connecticut and reduction of the legacy costs.

My name is Mary Ellen Junda. I am a Professor of Music at the University of Connecticut and currently serve as President of the UConn Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (UConn-AAUP), the union represents 1800 faculty members and coaches in collective bargaining.

During this critical time, we must continue to recognize how important the University of Connecticut is to the state, and how central faculty are to the university. *Every year* our faculty, coaches, trainers and research assistants meet with our 30,000 students during their matriculation at UConn. From classrooms, labs, workshops, internships, seminars, to study abroad, advisory roles and letters of recommendation, our members engage our student body at every stage of their training and education.

Additionally, each year UConn faculty are collectively responsible for publishing hundreds of peer-reviewed books, articles, and book chapters on topics that range from climate change to globally-recognized research on COVID-19. Our faculty are central to making a UConn the world-class university and have helped draw nearly 40,000 applicants from around the world to join our newest, and most diverse, freshman class.

As the pandemic begins to subside, we look forward to having *all* of our faculty be able to fully resume their research, scholarship and creative activities so that they can play a major role in the recovery and growth of the economy. One of the University's highest priorities is to grow its research output through strategic investments in faculty and facilities, doubling the current research capacity over the next 10 years. However, of increasing concern is the cost of fringe benefits, in particular the 33% associated with the unfunded legacy costs, the result of historically poor administrative decisions. Last year, an additional \$7 million was awarded to UConn to reduce these costs, and the result was that the faculty were awarded a record \$375 million in research grants, the highest amount to date. The *annual* economic impact of UConn's research enterprise on Connecticut's economy is \$485 million- Just *imagine* the potential impact to the state's economy if UConn faculty can continue to be more competitive with national and international grants. The benefits to the Connecticut economy are staggering.

As reported by a UConn faculty study in 2020, the total impact to the state's economy includes \$5.3 billion input on the statewide economic output; 2600 jobs supported through \$2.6 billion in labor income from UConn and

other business to business and household spending; and for every dollar spent by UConn, 77 cents were generated elsewhere in the state economy.¹

However, support from the legislature is critical for this bold research initiative to become reality. The unfunded liability alone hampers the ability for faculty to successfully secure external research grants. and funding for UConn's block grant diminishes annually.

I urge the Appropriations Committee to act boldly during this legislative session by taking the unfunded liability off the backs of faculty and maintaining the FY22 appropriations that UConn and UConn Health have requested in the biennium budget. These appropriations are absolutely necessary to achieve the research goals that will not only benefit our faculty and students, but more importantly, our entire state.

¹ Lopez, R., Fallahi, and M., Lanza, S.; *State Economic Impacts of the University of Connecticut*, January 2020; <https://impact.uconn.edu/content/uploads/2020/01/UConn-Economic-Impact-Report-1.pdf>